

**URBAN  
SAINTS**

**RESOURCE**

# **Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

Effective support for  
young people with  
additional needs

# Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Young people who are deaf or who are hard of hearing are often referred to as 'deaf', 'Deaf', 'hard of hearing', 'deafened' or 'deafblind'. This wide ranging, and often confusing, range of terms represents the different degrees of hearing loss from being unable to hear certain frequencies through to being totally unable to hear at all.

Some young people are born deaf ('Deaf'), while others may lose their hearing through accident or illness ('deaf'). Some, but not all, young people may be able to use sign language. Some may also use hearing aids or may lip read.



## Key issues

- Difficulties understanding what is being said, sung, or the audio track to video etc.
- Being unable to hear warnings e.g. *fire alarms*.
- Being unaware of someone approaching them from behind.
- Varying degrees of difficulty with communication.



# Support strategies for your group

- **Always make sure that the young person is aware that you want to communicate with them** before speaking e.g. a gentle touch on the arm to gain attention is acceptable.
- When speaking to a group that includes a young person who is deaf or hard of hearing, **make sure that the young person is sat at the front, can see your face, and that there are no windows behind you** to cause shadows or reflections. Make sure that nobody walks between you and the young person and that there are no pillars, equipment etc. blocking their view.
- **Talk at a normal pace**, do not shout, keep your hands away from your face and do not eat, drink or chew gum when talking to either an individual young person or a group.
- **Be prepared to write things down** or provide handouts if needed.
- If talking to a deaf or hard of hearing young person and a hearing person who is with them, **address the deaf or hard of hearing young person normally**, not through the hearing person.
- If possible, **use a microphone and amplifier**. If your building has an induction loop system, use this if a young person has a hearing aid. It is important to test and maintain induction loops regularly.
- **Make sure your building has good clear signage**. This will prevent deaf or hard of hearing young people needing to ask for directions.
- **If you have a young person in the group that uses sign language**, see if one of your team knows British Sign Language (BSL), Makaton, Signalong, or whatever the young person uses.
- Perhaps most importantly, if communication with a deaf or hard of hearing young person proves difficult, **don't give up!** It is so discouraging when people do.



**Use the international symbol on all literature**, on the notice board and outside of where you

meet, to indicate that you provide facilities for hard of hearing people. If you use an induction loop system, use the version of the symbol that reflects this (with a 'T').

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## Further Information: Open Ears [openears.org.uk](https://openears.org.uk)

Research shows that young people with additional needs are more likely to be abused than their peers (NSPCC) This increased vulnerability is due to a number of factors including communication differences, increased dependence on caregivers, social isolation and a higher likelihood that warning signs would be missed or misinterpreted. As a youth leader it's therefore important to be especially alert to changes in behaviour and wellbeing and discuss any concerns with a safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity.



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of the many ways we're  
here to walk with you!**

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This resource has been adapted from our Invited to Belong Team Training Kit.



If you're interested in helping your team become more aware and welcoming of young people with additional needs, you can explore our Invited to Belong Team Training Kit at [urbansaints.org/resources](https://urbansaints.org/resources)

The original content of this resource was created in partnership with **Youthscape** as part of the Invited to Belong resource.